

24 September 1968

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Comment on the NSC Paper Entitled The 23rd United Nations General Assembly

NSC REVIEW
COMPLETED,
06/26/2003

1. In general, the paper is a fairly well-balanced forecast of the issues which will come before the Assembly and the manner in which they will be dealt with there.

2. Secretary General Thant's press conference on 23 September, given after this paper was written, may, however, presage a shift in the dominant theme of the Assembly. Thant indicated that he is more reproachful of US bombing of North Vietnam than of the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia. Should any country decide to propose an agenda item on Viet Nam, a course of action Thant appeared to encourage, the matter of American involvement there could well rival the Czech situation as the dominant issue in the new session. Such a proposal (even if it failed to receive the majority vote necessary for inscription) would at least intensify the polemics and could even generate renewed interest in a specific item on Czechoslovakia as a counter move.

3. Regarding the Middle East, the paper's statement that "there can be no certainty that Jarring will make any progress" is, if anything, too optimistic.

*CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM
RELEASE IN FULL 1995*

NSC

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NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20506

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September 23, 1968

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL MEETING NO. 590

September 25, 1968 -- 12:00 noon

AGENDA

The 23rd UN General Assembly

Discussion of State Department paper circulated to Council members on September 23, 1968.

DDI has copy.

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL:

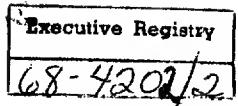
The attached paper prepared by the State Department will serve as the basis of a National Security Council discussion of issues facing the UN General Assembly which opens this week. The Council meeting is now scheduled for 12:00 noon, September 25.

Bromley Smith

Bromley Smith

Attachment

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NSC PAPER

THE 23RD UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

I. Introduction

The Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia will be the dominant theme of the general debate at the 23rd General Assembly, which opens on September 24. The Soviets would like to sweep the matter under the rug, but will surely react to criticism coming from a wide spectrum of countries by trying to divert attention with issues such as Viet-Nam and to reduce any discussion of Czechoslovakia to simple cold war terms. We can expect strident polemics on contentious international problems.

Although the situation in the Middle East remains a major problem, efforts to move toward a settlement will take place on the margin of the Assembly in the form of negotiations by Ambassador Jarring with the Arab and Israeli Foreign Ministers in New York at the beginning of the session. There will be a full debate on disarmament issues, but we do not expect any major initiatives or significant achievements. Discussion of Viet-Nam should be somewhat moderated by a desire to avoid complicating the Paris talks on that subject. There will be a desire to extend UN humanitarian assistance to the peoples of Nigeria, despite African sensitivities over outside intervention in the Nigerian civil war.

This will not be a historic General Assembly. The time is clearly not right for major new proposals for international cooperation. In the fields of international economic and scientific development and in disarmament there will be no outstanding new initiatives, though there may be some serious, realistic stocktaking as well as much inconsequential comment. There is nevertheless some scope for constructive movement on lesser matters of world concern.

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II. Major Issues

A. Czechoslovakia

On this subject, we fully intend to use the forum of the General Debate to concentrate the weight of the members' opprobrium on the Soviets. Our basic problem will be to maintain the psychological pressure in ways that give the Soviets the least scope for defending themselves. The Soviets will of course attempt to deflect attention by counterattacks on other issues (German "revanchism", Viet-Nam, and the Middle East) and generally will try to place Czech events in a cold war context in hopes of silencing the non-aligned countries that have so far been willing to criticize Soviet intervention.

In determining what actions the Assembly might take concerning Czechoslovakia, there are at least three pertinent considerations for the U.S.: what would be helpful to the Czechs, what would keep world attention focused on the Soviet intervention, and what course of action would deter further Soviet adventures. On this basis, and bearing in mind the possibility of further developments inside Czechoslovakia before or during the session, we see four possible alternatives for General Assembly action on the Czech question:

(1) First, a specific agenda item on Czechoslovakia and an Assembly resolution calling for immediate withdrawal of Soviet forces.

(2) Second, a carefully phrased agenda item oriented to Europe which could serve to focus attention on the Czech question without specifically mentioning Czechoslovakia, while limiting Soviet ability to exploit non-European issues as a diversion.

(3) Third, a more broadly phrased agenda item calling, for example, on all states everywhere to refrain from interference in the affairs of others. This would presumably gain the greatest support for inscription, but would also

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be most difficult to steer toward the adoption of a meaningful resolution. It would give the greatest scope for Soviet counterattacks and major debates on issues such as the Middle East and Viet-Nam.

(4) Fourth, avoiding a separate agenda item and instead concentrating our pressures on the Soviets in the general debate as well as in the discussion of every item relevant to the Soviets' misconduct--for example, those dealing with freedom of information, human rights, non-intervention, anti-colonialism, and friendly relations between states.

We have made soundings among delegations in New York and elsewhere to gauge the degree of interest in effective handling of the Czech question. Ambassador Ball and Assistant Secretary Sisco discussed this matter in the North Atlantic Council where they found great caution regarding the inscription of an item. The Latin Americans have similar reservations, as do Yugoslavia and Romania. The prospects thus are not good for a special agenda item centered on Czechoslovakia, unless the situation there deteriorates sharply.

B. The Middle East

The Arab-Israeli dispute in all its facets will be aired with customary polemics during the debate on the annual report of UNRWA (the Palestine refugee assistance organization). UNRWA's mandate expires in June 1969, and decisions regarding the future of the refugee relief organization will therefore have to be taken. In the end, we expect that UNRWA's mandate will be continued without substantial change for a period of three to five years. UNRWA is doing an effective job of caring for the refugees, and its dissolution, in the absence of a peaceful settlement, would only complicate present efforts to achieve peace and would add to instability in the area.

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The real center of action, however, will be off-stage, where we hope the gathering of Foreign Ministers will provide the occasion for serious substantive discussions between the Arabs and the Israelis through Ambassador Jarring, the Secretary-General's special representative. We continue to believe that a practicable Middle East settlement in the end must be based on the principles contained in the President's address of June 19, 1967 and the Security Council resolution of November 22. In short, the parties must be persuaded to engage in good-faith exchanges of views looking toward withdrawal of Israeli forces in the context of a real peace recognizing Israel's right to live, innocent maritime passage for its vessels in Suez and Tiran, and justice for the refugees. Given the increasing terrorism and violence in the area, there can be no certainty that Jarring will make any progress. If he fails to do so, the matter will again revert to the Security Council where the U.S. will face a very difficult situation.

C. Nigeria

The humanitarian aspects of the Nigerian situation will be aired in the General Debate and under human rights items. However, a specific agenda item on this matter is likely to face African opposition, since the Africans fear that any consideration would inevitably infringe upon the political aspects of the problem. The recent summit meeting of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) clearly opposed UN involvement on the political aspects. Because of the sensitive political issues of secession and civil war, the African states continue to want to deal with the issue as an African matter within the OAU. A specific agenda item limited to the humanitarian aspects is doubtful.

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D. Disarmament

We do not expect significant fresh initiatives on disarmament in the Assembly, which after a full debate will probably refer most resolutions to the Geneva Eighteen-Nation Disarmament Committee (ENDC) for more specific discussion. The Non-Nuclear Conference (NNC) at Geneva has--as expected-- considered a number of harmful proposals bearing very directly upon Western security and use of our nuclear deterrent for individual and collective defensive purposes. The Conference has also generated unhelpful demands for creation of new international bodies to administer peaceful uses of nuclear energy. We believe it would not be possible to create new bodies as effective or as well organized as the existing structure of the International Atomic Energy Agency. The Conference is also flirting with unrealistic proposals for peaceful nuclear (Plowshare) explosives; ironclad guarantees for assurances against nuclear attack or threats; and sweeping commitments for nuclear disarmament.

Even though the NNC lacks focus and expertise, many of its members seem nevertheless determined to perpetuate the conference by having it meet every year or two. We strongly oppose continuation of the conference after it concludes this month, convinced that it is far better to have arms control discussions carried on in the General Assembly, and in the ENDC, where both nuclear and non-nuclear powers are well represented by relatively expert personnel.

In addition to dealing with the results of the NNC, the General Assembly will have before it the report of the ENDC as well as a last-minute Soviet disarmament item quoting in full an earlier Soviet memorandum loaded with propaganda. Unfortunately, the overshadowing influence of the Czech crisis will hamper Soviet-American cooperation of the type which produced the Non-Proliferation Treaty and which could lead to negotiations to limit strategic nuclear delivery systems.

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E. Seabeds

For the second time, the Assembly will be considering ways in which, through international cooperation, the deep ocean floor can be exploited for peaceful purposes and in the common interest. Last month, the UN Ad Hoc Committee on the Seabeds appointed last year concluded its work with a report outlining the problems in this area and highlighting the deep differences of opinion which must be overcome if deep seabed development is to take place in an orderly and beneficial way. Our long term objectives are support for the U.S.-sponsored International Decade of Ocean Exploration; an acceptable statement of legal principles to govern the exploration and use of the deep seabed; and a sound and verifiable agreement to ban nuclear weapons from the deep seabed. We will attempt to persuade General Assembly members that proceeding through consensus rather than numerical majorities is the only alternative to a basic split between underdeveloped and advanced countries which would frustrate the whole exercise. This will mean that very little progress will be made this year; the work will be carried on in a continuing Assembly committee.

F. Southern Africa

The situation in southern Africa will continue to occupy much of the Assembly's time and to demand difficult decisions. On Southern Rhodesia and South West Africa we have reached the point where there is little room to maneuver. Measures designed to persuade the white minority regimes of the need for change have not succeeded and in fact have been undercut by Rhodesian and South African moves which make a peaceful solution of these problems all but impossible in the foreseeable future.

The Africans can be expected to press to have the General Assembly call for adoption by the Security Council of punitive economic measures against South Africa and Portugal for violation of Security Council resolutions imposing sanctions against Southern Rhodesia. Similarly, the

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Africans will want the Assembly to call upon the Security Council to use economic and military sanctions to force South Africa to hand over administration of South West Africa to the United Nations.

We are prepared to support the implementation of measures already in effect while discouraging impractical proposals. We cannot condone apartheid, but we cannot agree to extending sanctions. We will continue to urge South Africa to explore with us and with the United Nations the means to move the South West African and Southern Rhodesian questions onto more productive ground.

G. Chinese Representation

The continued disarray on the Chinese mainland, Peking's role in Viet-Nam, the divisions among the Communist countries, and the absence of any marked improvement in Communist China's relations abroad have contributed to a lack of enthusiasm among influential members for Peking's admission. All signs point toward a repeat performance in the General Assembly's handling of this issue this year. The usual agenda item has been introduced calling for the expulsion of the Republic of China and the seating of Chinese Communists. We expect that a resolution to this effect will again be defeated, after the Assembly has reaffirmed that this issue is an important question requiring a two-thirds vote. We see no indication that the Assembly will favor the resolution setting up a study committee on this question, which has been rejected by the last two Assemblies.

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